

Savannah Victorian Historic District
Savannah
Chatham County
Georgia

GA-1169

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HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

SAVANNAH VICTORIAN HISTORIC DISTRICT

GA-1169

Introduction

The Victorian District, located just south of the original settlement in Savannah, represents a fairly intact neighborhood of well-built frame houses, many of which are ornamented with the exuberant sawn-work details of the late nineteenth-century carpenter-builder. For this reason alone it was placed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1974. Residents looking for a convenient inner-city neighborhood find its architecture has great aesthetic value and a pleasing human scale. The District is also the testing ground of a unique conservation effort to renew a valuable but deteriorated housing stock, to attract a solid economic base, and to integrate new compatible construction without displacing the low- and moderate-income homeowners and renters who have lived there for several generations. Additionally, the district presents another sensitive problem for those attempting to preserve its character, for as Victorian houses begin to be appreciated nation-wide, neglected examples such as those in the Victorian District become a source of architectural fragments for antique hunters.

This area currently known as the Victorian District extends from Gaston Street on the north to Anderson Lane on the south, and from East Broad Street to West Broad Street.¹ Historically, these lands were part of the farm lots set aside in Oglethorpe's scheme for the colony. Gradually, the city limits, constrained by the Savannah River to the north and low-lying wetlands to the east and west, expanded southward. By the 1850s all available public or common lands had been developed, and developers began to subdivide the privately owned farm lots.

Rapid development of this area was further encouraged by two additional factors: the street railway and the absence of fire zoning codes restricting the construction of non-fireproof buildings. As a result, the buildings were mostly of frame construction, simply planned and featuring jigsawn applied ornament. Because the street railway provided access to downtown, the area was settled by working-class families who built their own homes or rented one that had been built by a developer. The District was built up rapidly, aided by public improvements such as water and sewage lines, gas and electricity. Today almost 800 structures remain, dating from the late 1860s to the first quarter of the twentieth century.

With the advent of the automobile and electric trolleys, the arc of suburban development again widened, and by 1910 the Victorian District was an inner-city neighborhood. The area which had provided modest homes for Savannahians during the financial recovery period following the Civil War, now grew out-of-fashion as the children of these families moved to grander homes in more affluent neighborhoods often promoted by men like J. A. G. Carson, who himself had been a prominent resident of the Victorian District.

The houses over the ensuing years were subdivided into apartments and occupied primarily by low-income black tenants. The future of this neighborhood depends on the skill and speed with which the houses can be rehabilitated while accommodating the special needs of these people who have lived for several decades in this area. Ironically many of these tenants live in conditions little changed from the nineteenth century. Knob and tube electric wiring is common. One elderly resident heated his house by the fireplace as he was unable to afford the utility bills. Wood stoves for cooking are not uncommon. There is no central heating; gas space heaters vented through crumbling chimneys provide the only warmth in the house. One woman heats her water on a stove and carries it to the tub; another man must bail his tub out to empty it.

The problems are immense and a forceful effort is underway to deal with the neglect of forty years of absentee landlord ownership and current often insensitive remodeling efforts. Savannah Landmark Rehabilitation Project, Inc., a non-profit housing corporation, is using Federal loan and grant programs to rehabilitate the houses without sacrificing architectural detail and then rent them to neighborhood residents. Other private preservation groups like Historic Savannah Foundation are interested in promoting upper-income investment and new construction in the area. The city of Savannah has designated the Victorian District a Neighborhood Strategy Area and has received a commitment of Urban Development Action Grant monies for public improvements based on private dollar commitment in the area. Such efforts must come from a sound base of understanding of the character of the neighborhood.

The purpose of this report, therefore, is to examine the historical and physical elements of the Victorian District in order to gain a better understanding of its character. In twelve weeks this study could not begin to deal with all the topics related to the Victorian District. Public buildings and institutions have been omitted, as have detailed histories of the early families connected with the District. For the present, however, the following pages summarize the major elements of the development of the Victorian District. From this project, new construction guidelines, protective ordinances and rehabilitation standards can be developed which will allow for compatible future growth.

Part I. Historical Information

In 1733, Savannah was laid out atop a high bluff along the south bank of the Savannah River. To the east and west the land sloped off significantly into wetlands, used for rice culture, until medical knowledge of the causes of yellow fever forced the draining of the low lands in the immediate vicinity of the city. The expansion of the city itself corresponded to the contour of the high ground. McKinnon's Map of ca. 1800 indicated the small nucleus of the city where the colonists erected houses on 60' by 90' lots. The city proper was surrounded by an open space, known as the common. This was the area into which the small city would subsequently expand. Flanking the Common and the city at center were five-acre farm lots. The whole was symmetrically divided by White Bluff Road, now Bull Street. The farm lots, representing by far the largest use of land as shown on the McKinnon Map, extended from present-day Gwinnett Street southward three miles. To the east they extended nearly to the Wilmington River and to the west, four miles. They were arranged in blocks of lots.

As the city expanded, it was not long before all the common land was developed and the garden lots lost their identity as they became merged into tracts bearing other names. By 1838, development was pressing the borders of the farm lots. The boundaries of the Victorian District correspond generally with Farm Lot number 1, Holland Tything, Percival Ward and Farm Lot number 1, Tryconnel Tything, Derby Ward, with Bull Street as the central division (see HABS Photo GA-1169-227).

The earliest development of these farm lots was begun by James Frew, a dealer in lumber and building supplies who mortgaged the south half of Farm Lot number 1, Holland Tything, Percival Ward in 1843.² This was bounded by Park Avenue, then known as New Houston Street, on the north, Montgomery Street on the west, Bull Street on the east, and Anderson Street on the south. The development contained 114 building lots, each 60' by 115', streets and lanes and was called Oglethorpe Town. It was co-owned by Amos Webb. The firm of Frew and Webb dissolved in 1850 and two years later 109 of the building lots had to be sold at auction to pay the firm's debts. Advertisements for the sale indicate that subdivision restrictions for this area had been published a decade earlier,³ but due to the inaccessibility of the area it is unlikely that any major improvement of the lots occurred until after the Civil War. Nonetheless, a few lots were developed in the 1850s, but if these houses are still extant, they have not been documented. Oglethorpe Town survived as a distinct neighborhood until 1870, when it was absorbed as Gallie and Gue Wards.

After the Civil War, Savannah began to rebuild as its port regained ascendancy. In August, 1870, an ordinance was passed to extend the city limits of Savannah south from Gwinnett to Anderson Street.⁴ In other areas of the city, new construction was intended for upper middle classes, as evidenced by this 1879 description of a row of houses located in the heart of post-Civil War Savannah:

Modern Dwellings for Small Families: Each house is provided with bathrooms, hot and cold water, and water closets, wash sinks, dumb waiters and speaking tubes and bells leading from various rooms and kitchens. They are indeed most desirable residences for small families, there being in such four bedrooms on the second floor, three very good sized ones, two parlors, dining room adjoining the kitchen with sliding glass windows between. The Charlton Street houses have the addition of a neat two-story frame building at the rear, stable and carriage house below, two good sized servants rooms above. The sliding doors between the parlors are very handsome, the upper half being a neat stained glass thus offering ample light in the room when closed. The doors of the other rooms are in the same style. The houses are provided with gas and the water arrangements are excellent.⁵

Architects and builders were taking advantage of all the "modern" improvements available to them and were constructing substantial brick townhouses for the merchants. In the decades of the 1870s, 1880s, and 1890s, Savannah constructed hotels, art museums, a cotton exchange, a court house, and an armory. The architects hired to design these public buildings found patrons for elaborate Queen Anne houses in brick and terra cotta. William Gibbons Preston of Boston and Alfred Eichberg of Atlanta led the list of architects producing these impressive and substantial structures.

But the soldier returning home from the battlefields of Appomattox and Antietam trying to piece back together a domestic life, working as a clerk or bookkeeper, could ill afford to hire an architect to design an expensive brick structure. The fire codes prohibited wooden structures in the older sections of the city, forcing families to live in boarding houses and other crowded rental situations. There followed a demand by the working middle class for moderately priced small houses.

This need was answered by new construction in what is now called the Victorian District. Family names like Koch, Krouskoff, Wolber, and Goetke, are reminders that this was a neighborhood where German and German-Russian immigrants could build a modest home and begin a new life, undoubtedly aided financially by the German-American Loan and Building Company. French immigrants--Roumillat, Boulineau, Jaudon, Durbec, and Chastanet--also found refuge here.

Perhaps the single most important factor which influenced the development of the Victorian District was the creation of the mutual loan associations. They provided men of moderate means the opportunity to buy or build houses and pay for them in installments. An article in the Savannah Morning News in 1885 illustrates the method used:

(Suppose) the case of some one who desires to build a \$2,000 house. He advances 10%. The association then puts up the building. The buyer is given ten years to pay for the house.

The minimum sum is \$22.50 a month for the 120 months. At the end of that time he has paid \$2,700. exclusive of the first deposit of \$200. When he has paid the \$2,700. he is given a clear title to the house. The use of \$2,000 for 10 years at 7%, would be \$1,400. The usual rent of 10%, would be \$2,000. The purchaser, therefore, only pays \$900 more during the ten years than he would if he rented at the usual terms.⁶

There were many building and loan associations lending money in the Victorian District, but the Home Building Company, organized in 1888, was one of the most prolific. On its Board of Directors were some of the most prominent names connected with the development of the District. People like C. H. Dorsett, a real estate dealer and County Commissioner, D. B. Lester, who subsequently became Mayor of Savannah, P. D. Daffin, later an Alderman, and John L. Hammond. They constructed dozens of homes, often relying on plans provided through builders' manuals such as Shoppell's Modern Houses. One of their houses is 1002 Drayton Street (HABS No. GA-1169 P), built for Dr. George Hummel.

From a planning standpoint, the Victorian District lacks the beautiful squares of old Savannah, having only Forsyth Park Extension and Dixon Park as its principal open spaces. Early promoters of the suburb declared it had "room," the illusion of which they created by setting the houses back from the lot line, allowing space for gardens or grass. Buildings in the older sections of Savannah were generally built on the lot line with their stoops encroaching on the public sidewalks. In the Victorian District, for the most part, there is a continuous green buffer between house and sidewalk, reinforced by low copings. This detail, along with the seven foot tree area between the sidewalk and street, created a desirable residential area.

The development of this area was both directed by and reflected in the public improvements. Public transportation, parks, utilities, and street paving all had a profound impact on where this development would be, and what kind of people it would attract. None of these improvements took place without an already stated need, however. The appearance of an improvement in an area indicated that development had occurred or was imminent.

Street Railway

The Victorian District was Savannah's first "streetcar suburb." In 1867, the city passed an ordinance authorizing the laying down and construction of carriage railways in the streets of Savannah.⁷ The Savannah, Skidaway and Suburban Railroad Company constructed the first street railroad within the city limits. By March 1869, tracks extended from Bay to Anderson Street.⁸ Two cars arrived, built by the John Stephens Company of New York. They were open cars, eighteen feet long and seated six on a side. The side

panels over the windows proclaimed "Bay to Anderson" and the side panels beneath the body of the car held the letters "S. G. & S. R. R." The inside of the cars was fitted with wooden seats and the platforms were wide and low. The cars were drawn by one horse.⁹

In 1869 the Savannah Morning News ran an editorial describing the opportunities provided by this new mode of transportation:

Now that the street railroad affords a speedy means of communication between the extreme northern and southern sections of the city, we hope to see an impetus given to the building of houses on the lots now lying open in the southern part of the city. A fine opportunity is now afforded to give Savannah an appearance of beauty which it has never before known, by the building of handsome cottage houses out in that section which shall not be too large for a small family nor too small for the moderate sized one; and houses which will suit the pecuniary resources of a class of people who are not by any means wealthy, but who in point of respectability, intelligence, etc. rank with the best. At present such persons have either to adopt the tenement system, and live two or three families in one house, or else take refuge in a boarding house.¹⁰

Parks

When Oglethorpe Town was laid out in 1850, no mention was made by its developers of any intention to provide public parks. Evidently, the success of Savannah's plan with its famous squares depended entirely upon the fact that the land was owned in common, and its development controlled by municipal authority. As soon as this common land was used up, most private developers simply omitted or greatly reduced the number of open spaces.

The largest public open space in the Victorian District came about in 1867. The United States Government had become owner in 1827 of a tract of land whose boundaries roughly corresponded to Montgomery Street, Bull Street, Gwinnett Street, and Park Avenue. This land adjoined the site of Oglethorpe Town and was used as a permanent military station or cantonment. In 1853, however, the government conveyed this tract to the city of Savannah and in turn the City Council granted the portion lying west of Whitaker Street to the volunteer military companies of Savannah for the purposes of a military parade ground. This was exchanged in 1860 for the land south of Gwinnett Street and immediately east of Bull Street.¹¹ Owners of land in this tract were given either cash or other lots lying west of Whitaker Street. It took three years to complete these transactions.

Once the swap was completed, the parade ground was added to Forsyth Park. This occurred in 1867.¹² Three years later, the adjacent landowners asked the city to landscape the new addition, a petition depleted city treasuries could not sustain. The proposal was referred to the Committee on Parks which reported that it was not feasible to do at the time.¹³

One of the last public improvements made in the District involved the creation of the second park. In 1906, the city bought a tract of land between Henry and Duffy Streets on East Broad Street and dedicated it as Dixon Park.¹⁴

Water

In 1871, when J. J. Waring wanted to develop his former farm lot, he changed the name of his development from Waringville to Waring Ward and gave the city legal rights-of-way through his lands in exchange for public sewer construction.¹⁵ This "horsetrading" was a common practice, and probably accounts for the haphazard manner in which streets were opened up in the Victorian District.

The request for public sewers in exchange for the opening of streets was significant to the development of the district. Drainage was critical because the Victorian District was surrounded by low-lying areas. One description mentions "immense Confederate breastworks and moats filled with stagnant water"¹⁶ south of Anderson Street.

The City Council was petitioned in 1869 to drain these stagnant pools by means of a ditch connected to the Duffy Street drain. "Your petitioners think it is scarcely necessary to remind you of the great improvement this drainage would effect in the health of the southern taxable portion of the City, and the strong impulse to building improvements which would rapidly follow and in time become a source of great revenue to the City."¹⁷

The first water pipes were laid in the Victorian District in 1871, and became operable in '72. Pipes were extended down Whitaker to Park Avenue west on Waldburg to Montgomery, west on Bolton to Jefferson, north to Hall, and west on Hall to West Broad and east on Hall to Abercorn.¹⁸ These pipes made a flush toilet system possible in the District; however, the first houses built here still used the old privy system.

Dr. Waring, in his petition to City Council in 1871 asking to change the name of his development, also asked for a new ordinance regulating sewage in his district. He proposed that:

1. No cess vault or sink should be deeper than three feet, and they should be lined with watertight bricks. Previously, the vaults were required to be six feet deep, and were cleaned when they were filled to a level of three feet. Dr. Waring claimed that the water leaked out of the porous bricks, making pumping the vaults impossible. The vaults were extremely loathsome and Dr. Waring advocated a system of removable containers.

2. The lot owners should substitute water closets wherever connections could be made with a proper sewer or drywell, or lot owners should substitute earth closets or movable surface latrines for the cess vaults.
3. A properly licensed city employee should clean the vaults.
4. The city should compel property owners anywhere in the city near sewers to fill all cess vaults and substitute one of the other methods he outlined. He further asked the city to provide free emptying service for one year to all owners who complied with the new regulations, as an incentive to do so.

At the time of Dr. Waring's request, privies were required of every house and apartment. Dr. Waring's suggestions were taken seriously and by 1873 water closets could be erected in lieu of sinks, as the privies were called, supplied with water from the Savannah waterworks, and voided into either drywells or the drains of the city. Again each apartment had to have its own water closet.

Water closets and indoor baths gradually replaced the outdoor privies, but the process was slow. The city was prohibited from laying mains during the months of May to November, based on the assumption that disturbing the streets in hot weather caused fever. There was also a common fear that sewer gas might be exhaled into the houses, causing disease. A physical problem was that water pressure was not sufficient to cleanse the drainage pipes at any considerable distance from the reservoir. These problems notwithstanding, by 1877 there was 30 water closets on Bolton Street, 8 on Waldburg Street, 9 on Duffy Street, 33 on Park Avenue, and five on Henry Street.¹⁹

Even though the houses were equipped with piped water, doing away with the contaminated surface wells, the water was by no means free from potential contaminants. Savannah's water supply initially came directly from the Savannah River, where it dumped its raw sewage. Even moving the waterworks upriver did not solve the problem. During the years 1876-1879 Savannahians began to talk about alternative sources for their domestic water supply, with artesian wells being a popular suggestion. It was not until 1885 that the first artesian well was dug in Savannah by Captain D. G. Purse and Colonel J. H. Estill in the southwestern part of the city adjacent to the Victorian District. It was a success and soon artesian wells were supplying the city with seven million gallons of water daily and Savannah's health improved. In 1895 an ordinance was passed prohibiting the use of surface wells in the city wherever water from the city mains was accessible. In spite of continuous attempts, a uniform system of house drainage was not completed until 1900.

Gas and Electricity

The Mutual Gas Light Company began to lay mains for the first time in the Victorian District in January 1884.²⁰ On the east side the mains branched off Drayton Street from Gwinnett Street south to Henry Street; on the west side they branched off Barnard Street. By May 1884, some houses could boast of gas heat, gas stoves, and gas hot water. More mains were laid in 1890, but at the same time this illuminating gas was replacing oil lamps, technological advances in electricity were eclipsing it as a lighting source.

The year 1882 saw the formation of two electric companies in Savannah, the Savannah Electric and Power Company, organized in January, and the Brush Electric Light and Power Company, organized in March. The city had long recognized the necessity of supplying additional street lighting, and electricity appeared to be the most economical source. A contract was let to the Brush Electric Light and Power Company to light the city. This was done by lamps suspended from a series of towers erected in 1883. One was located at the intersection of Montgomery and Bolton Streets, and another at the intersection of Abercorn and Waldburg Streets.

By 1887 the incandescent system was being studied for use. It was introduced into the Savannah Morning News Building and was praised particularly for its lack of smell. It was reported that one light of 70 volts was equal to two ordinary gas jets.²¹ By January 1890, poles were being erected south of Gaston Street for electric street lighting. They were turned on in March.

The first and second loops of the half arc system of electric lights had the electricity turned on last night, and no tower lights burned south of Liberty Street. All that part of the city north of Liberty Street was illuminated by the old system.

There were 100 lamps burning south of Liberty known as half arc lamps, and the southern portion of the city was generally brighter than under the tower light system, but when the trees are in full foliage the lights will be found wholly inadequate for the purpose of a perfect illumination.²²

Rearranging the lamps as necessary solved the problem of dark spots and by the early 1900s houses were being equipped exclusively with electric fixtures. Initially electricity was not always a reliable source and was combined with gas as illustrated here:

While the Electric Light Company was holding a meeting at Armory Hall May 16, 1889, the lights went off, leaving members discussing the benefits of electricity in darkness. As the janitor was lighting the gas, the electricity came on.²³

Paving

Shell walks provided the initial paved communication between the Victorian District and downtown. They ran down the side of Forsyth Park.²⁴ Elsewhere in the District brick walks were laid, but there was no system of uniform sidewalks until 1902. The paving of streets had an even lower priority. Brick or cobblestone paths were initially placed at major crossings in the Victorian District but they provided little help in crossing the deep sand of the streets. Whitaker Street and a few other major thoroughfares in the Victorian District were paved with cobblestone but this was not a particularly sanitary solution, so beginning about 1900 the streets were paved in vitrified brick. Examples of this can still be seen in downtown Savannah. For most of the streets in the Victorian District this was the first paving they had had.

All of these public improvements encouraged and reflected the development of the Victorian District. The suburbs built up rapidly during the late 1880s and early 1890s, until in 1897 the Morning News reported "the scarcity of good building lots north of Anderson Street is becoming more apparent everyday. The city is compactly built to that part."²⁵ By 1910 building lots extended for twenty-five blocks south of the Victorian District and motor car suburbs supplanted this now inner-city neighborhood.

Part II. Architectural Information

Some houses in the Victorian District were built for rental use and others for occupation by the owner, but both were similarly modest in appearance. Rental houses are noticeable because they were often built in rows of identical houses which lend the streetscape rhythm and continuity. What large mansions there were generally were built along Forsyth Park and near the northern end of the district. The Harden House at 223 East Gwinnet Street (HABS Photo GA-1169-239) and the Wood House at 803 Whitaker Street (HABS Photo GA-1169-253) are spectacular, but are not typical of the overall cottage character of the Victorian District.

In general, two-story frame structures occupied the front of the lots with smaller one- and two-story structures occupying the rear of the lot, fronting on the service lanes. The ground in between was occupied variously by buggy houses, stables, wood houses, coal houses, and free-standing kitchens. For example, a separate kitchen was indicated by the Sanborn Map of 1888 for the house at 107 West Duffy Street (HABS No. GA-1169 F), which dated from 1867 and was located in Oglethorpe Town. In the few three-story structures or central-hall buildings the kitchens were located on the ground floor.

By about 1890, cooking fireplaces were replaced by woodburning stoves or in rare instances by gas stoves. In 1892 the local firm of Norton and Hanley advertised, among other things, gas fixtures, iron king stoves and West Shore ranges.²⁶ With these technological advances in cooking machinery reducing the chance of fire, kitchens moved into the main block of the house, as did pantries and laundries.

The cheaper tenements along the lanes were built for mixed uses. The Sanborn maps show both rental dwellings and servants' quarters. They were built as one- and two-story cottages with plaster walls and waist-high wainscots. They were small--one is described as only 12' by 16,' divided into four rooms, two to a floor, but with a balcony. A similar type of cottage may be seen at 103 East Duffy Lane (HABS No. GA-1169 R) although it appears to have been built over a carriage house or car garage at the turn of the century.

In the 1860s and 1870s, central and side-hall plans predominate, two rooms deep. On the interior a straight run of stairs rises to the second story directly opposite the entry door. In the side-hall plan, the living room and dining room were downstairs, with bedrooms upstairs. The central-hall plan allowed for greater division of room function. If the fireplaces were located on the outside walls, then there could be a large double parlor such as that at 115 East Park Avenue (HABS No. GA-1169 Q), built in 1868. If the fireplaces were on the interior walls, then communication could be had across the central hall between the large reception rooms such

as that at 119 West Park Avenue (HABS No. GA-1169 E). In the 1880s the side-hall plan was extended to three rooms and a bay window was added, presumably to allow more light into the interior. The chimneys were almost always located on the exterior walls, allowing for double parlors with sliding doors between.

Towards the end of the 1880s the plans of the Co-operative Plan Association of New York began to influence local builders. This group advertised plans by a Philadelphia architect named Shoppell. Individuals could order the plans which were later published in a volume known as Shoppell's Modern Houses. The Home Building Company adopted some of the elements of these plans as did local architects. In fact, the Home Building Company is listed in several advertisements as a reference and J. J. Waring is given as a reference in Modern Houses. The house at 203 East Gwinnett Street is based on design number 521 in Modern Houses and elements of Shoppell's style may be seen in 213-215 East Bolton Street (HABS Photo No. GA-1169-25). The designs were for the most part in the Queen Anne style with an open interior plan.

In spite of Shoppell, the side-hall plan hung on into the 1890s. In acknowledgment of current styles, however, the staircase was more frequently located in an open well with two or three intermediate landings. In the high-style houses, the stairwell was lit by elaborate stained-glass windows.

In 1893 the Savannah Morning News noted that the "Old square, uninteresting and unpretentious buildings are giving way to edifices of the highest architectural excellence.... The box-like, carpenter's designed houses are no more built and those that were built not long before the city began to modernize are fast being remodeled into houses of the present day."²⁷ These modern houses were built in the Queen Anne style and the impression of breaking away from the box-like carpenter-built dwellings was given by the addition of towers, cupolas and multiple roof shapes. The plan remained basically the same into the twentieth century.

The houses in the Victorian District absorbed new improvements in plumbing, heating, and lighting as they became available. In response to the introduction of a domestic water supply, sewage and gas to the Victorian District, the builders of the 1880s sought to provide the residences with "all the modern improvements" with "particular attention being given to the plumbing."²⁸ Once the prejudice was overcome that the introduction of plumbing into houses would exhale noxious gases causing disease, water closets became regular features. The bath and lavatory were generally located in a separate room from the water closet. Communication to these rooms was off the common hall and no matter how wealthy the family, one seemed to suffice, probably due to the cost of installation. The walls of the bath and water closet were wainscoted waist high.

For ease in installing plumbing, the bathrooms were often located directly above the kitchen. Constructed in 1885 with a side-hall plan three rooms deep, 215 West Gwinnett Street (HABS No. GA-1169 A) had a kitchen and pantry communicating across the hall from the dining room in an ell off the rear of the house. Above these rooms the bath and water closet opened onto the common hall across from the bedrooms. On the other hand, 207 West Waldburg Street (HABS No. GA-1169 D), built in 1886, had its one-story kitchen attached to the house in a rear wing. The bathroom was located at the end of the second-floor hall. Here the corner sink and outline of a gravity flow tank can still be seen. By the 1890s, baths, kitchens and pantries were regularly built in the houses, the bath tiled in ceramic tiles rather than wood wainscoting.

Wealthier individuals in the 1880s could also afford the luxury of a conservatory and library. The following description outlines all the possible features of a house in the Victorian District in the 1880s, including an allusion to the expense involved in incorporating features such as gas and plumbing. This may help to explain why simpler cottages such as that at 313 East Bolton Street (HABS No. GA-1169 K) did without these features until they were added in later decades.

...Joseph McCauley is building for Clement Saussy a very commodious and handsomely finished two story residence which has a front of 53' on Bolton Street, and a depth of 73' on Abercorn. The appearance of the house is heightened on the Abercorn and Bolton Street sides by a two story piazza 8' in width, with 70' of continuous length on the first floor and 90' on the second, the ceiling being 13' and 10' high in the clear respectively.

The first floor is divided into seven rooms in addition to a hallway, 7' in width and 35' in length. The two parlors divided by an archway, are 17' in width and 36' in length, beyond which in the north end of the house is a dining room 17' wide and 22½' long, separated from the parlor by folding doors and connecting with a conservatory on the Abercorn Street side 8' wide by 20' in length. These rooms are on the east or right side of the hall as the visitor enters the house from Bolton Street....

On the left of the hall is the library measuring 17' by 26' and beyond that an alcove whence the stairway leads from the lower floor to the second floor. At the farther extremity of the hall is a door leading to the dining room, the upper portion of which is furnished with heavy plate glass. In the Northwest corner of this floor, and connecting with the dining room is a pantry 12' by 8' through which communication is had with the kitchen in the west end of the building, 15' by 17' and will be supplied with all the culinary furniture and conveniences including a

range in which gas only will be used for cooking. In fact, Mr. Saussy has made arrangements to have his house illuminated and warmed by gas, and the water to be used in the bath room heated, as required, by the same means. It is claimed that fixtures for the purpose will not be more than would be required for either wood or coal.

There are 46 windows in this residence, 23 on each floor. These with the doors, will be connected by wire, already concealed beneath the plastering of the walls, with a burgular alarm register that is to be placed in the hall on the second floor to indicate the window or door where an intruder may be attempting to effect an entrance. The hall in the second story is 7' in width and 29' long. On this floor also is a dressing room connecting with the principal bedroom on the right side of the hall on the Bolton Street side. This apartment is 26' by 17'; the other sleeping apartments four in number, measure 22' by 17', 17' by 18', 15' by 17' respectively.

The barthroom on the west side of the hall is 8' by 12' and the watercloset, 6' by 7'. The height from the attic floor to the roof in the center is 17'. A number of ventilators will assist in making this portion of the structure free from an excess of heated atmosphere during the warmer season of the year. The hallways and all the rooms are being plastered by Martin Houlihan, who has furnished elaborate cornices and handsome medallions. The hall and kitchen will also be wainscoted to a height of about 4' from the floor with polished cypress set in panels with trimmings in hard wood of contrasting colors. Beneath the residence is a cellar 14' square, for the storage of ice and other perishable articles such as are needed from time to time in every household. Mr. Saussy stated to a Morning News reporter yesterday that he expected the house would cost at least \$12,000, an amount in excess of the original estimate, and necessitated by the introduction of the burgular alarm wires and tubes and the extra inlet and outlet pipes connected with the heating and plumbing which were introduced under the immediate supervision of Mr. John Nicolson.²⁹

John Nicolson was a plumber and dealer in gas fixtures who advertised in 1878 that he could fit houses with gas and water and all the latest improvements at the shortest notice.³⁰ His competitor, William McFall, advertised his speediness too:

William McFall, Practical Plumber and gas fitter. Bath tubs, water closets, chandeliers and gas fixtures of every description constantly on hand. Jobbing done at the shortest notice.³¹

The control of summer temperature was achieved through the use of high ceilings and working transoms over the doors. Central heat in the winter was virtually non-existent. In the 1890s, wood-burning fireplaces were converted to coal, and in the twentieth century the coal fireplaces were augmented by gas space heaters, which are still the principal means of heating the houses in the Victorian District. The house at 215 West Gwinnett was the only structure inventoried for this report which showed evidence of central heating. Floor registers indicated some type of furnace system no longer in use. The gas steam radiator in the hall was manufactured by the A. A. Wolff Company of New York.

Illumination was by gas from 1884 until the early twentieth century. Almost as soon as gas was introduced in the Victorian District, however, electricity began to supplant it. In houses such as 215 West Gwinnett Street both gas and electric connections can be seen in ceiling medallions and walls, indicating the transitions which occurred as technology advanced. The house at 301-305 West Duffy Street (HABS No. GA-1169 G), built in 1913, was electrified at the outset and still retains many of its original fixtures.

Ornament in the Victorian District seems to have been limited to what was available in the builders' catalogs. Doors, windows, woodwork, porches--virtually any part of the building could be freely combined from these catalogs. The W. H. Hughes and Sons Catalog, the Yellow Pine Series, and in 1906 the first Sweets catalog all provided details found in the Victorian District. In 1884 Andrew Hanley's store on Whitaker Street provided an array of doors, sashes, blinds, moldings, stair rails, balusters, newel posts, oils, varnishes, and plain and decorative wallpaper. John G. Butler, a house, sign and decorative painter, also advertised paper hangings. Wallpapers were popular in the more elegant architect- and builder-designed houses. Borders, friezes, and dados as well as ceiling papers were often used in the 1880s and 1890s. In the Dorsett House at 215 West Gwinnett Street, remnants of brilliantly hued ceiling papers can be seen in the second parlor. Underneath the remnants of a stylized lily paper in an upstairs hall room, the word "Butler" appears in red pencil on the wall, indicating that perhaps John Butler supplied the paper in this house. Other examples of wallpaper have been photographed or salvaged at 116-118 East Duffy Street, built by the Home Building Company. It appears that overall floral patterns as well as strictly geometric patterns in vivid colors were popular at the time. At the turn of the century, white on white ceiling papers with an overall floral design were used. Picture moldings appear to be a standard feature of these houses; in the more elaborate houses they were gilded.

A frequent ornament of even the most modest home was the plaster medallion. These are found in the entrance halls and principal parlors and occasionally in dining rooms. They range from a simple circle such as that at 115 East Park Avenue to the heavy and elaborate geometric patterns found at 215 West Gwinnett Street. There is also evidence at 215 West Gwinnett Street that these medallions may have been colored. Generally a gas fixture hung from the center of these medallions.

Decorative fireplace tiles also played a significant role in nineteenth-century interior decoration in both carpenter-built and architect-designed houses. Relief designs were popular and were depicted in shades of yellow, rose, green, brown and blue. Subjects ranged from natural objects such as flowers, sea shells, classical designs such as urns and swags to purely geometric designs. One of the most unusual series of tiles depicts a venus flytrap plant, which grows only in the Carolina Low Country, indicating that perhaps these tiles could be custom-designed for clients. These tiles were produced by the Beaver Falls Art Tile Company of Beaver Falls, Pennsylvania, and installed in houses built in 1896 as investment property. These naturalistic themes gave way in the twentieth century to monochromatic tiles with matte glazes. Encaustic floor tiles, while not as common as the fireplace tiles, appear in the more elaborate Queen Anne-style houses in entrance foyers.

While mantels and plaster work are the focal point of interior decoration in the 1870s and 1880s, the entrance hall becomes the focal point in the Queen Anne-style houses. Doorways are surrounded by etched glass and later by leaded-glass windows. Stained glass was used to light stairwells. Unfortunately most of the outstanding examples of stained glass have been removed from the houses in the Victorian District, but examples did exist that can be traced to the Yellow Pine Catalog series. The stairs in these entrance halls ended in elaborate newel posts which in some instances bore gas or electric light fixtures. In the Wood House at 223 East Gwinnett Street, a carving of a winged man forms the newel in this elaborate stairhall. The house at 216 West Park Avenue also has a magnificent stair with carved panels as its railing. In the hall under the stairway, the house at 301-305 West Duffy Street, which dates from 1913, has a hinged seat which may be raised to reveal storage space.

On the exterior the principal decorative features were the bay window, porch, and decorative cornice. Gingerbread and brackets were used extensively until 1900. Front and side porches were used to catch cool breezes in the hot weather; rear porches were latticed and provided a cool private retreat. Between the brackets at the cornice line, decorative cutout designs were screened to provide ventilation in the attic area.

Decorative butt shingles and pressed metal ornamented some of the Queen Anne-style houses. Wood shingles on the roof were covered with standing seam tin. Later houses had tile and slate roofs. Gable ornaments known as acroteria were popular, sometimes, as in the case of the Dorsett House at 215 West Gwinnett Street proclaiming the owner's initials.

Windows used glass in increasing dimensions as the decades progressed. The houses of the 1860s and 1870s had principally six-over-six-light sash. These were supplanted in the 1880s by two-over-two-light sash and, in the case of bay and porch windows, a two-over-four-light window or four-over-six-light window which would raise up into the wall. By the end of the 1890s, one-over-one-light double hung windows were used, sometimes in pairs. Queen Anne-style windows with small colored panes surrounding a center pane were sometimes used in stairhalls or tower areas.

While the buildings were slow to change in plan, they changed in appearance through applied ornament and elements such as bay windows. The residents readily adopted technological changes as they became available, often without removing earlier fixtures. The variety of late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century structures present in the Victorian District illustrates the development of this area as a working-class streetcar suburb.

FOOTNOTES

1. The eastern and western boundaries of the Victorian District as listed on the National Register are Price Street and Montgomery Street respectively. Requests are being made to extend these boundaries to East and West Broad Streets.
2. Chatham County Deed Records, Book 3C, page 283, Superior Court Record Room, Chatham County Courthouse, Savannah, Georgia.
3. Savannah Morning News, December 7, 1852.
4. City Council, Savannah, Georgia. Minutes of the meeting of August 31, 1870, p. 450.
5. Savannah Morning News, September 1879.
6. Savannah Morning News, May 28, 1885.
7. Daily News Herald, April 5, 1867.
8. Savannah Morning News, March 22, 1869, p. 3, c. 1.
9. Savannah Morning News, January 28, 1869.
10. Savannah Morning News, February 20, 1869, p. 3, c. 2.
11. Isaac Beckett, Savannah Morning News, June 8, 1884.
12. City Council, Savannah, Georgia. Minutes of the meeting of February 6, 1867.
13. City Council, Savannah, Georgia. Minutes of a meeting in 1870, p. 535.
14. City Council, Savannah, Georgia. Minutes of the meeting of September 26, 1906.
15. City Council, Savannah, Georgia. Minutes of the meeting of March 1, 1871, p. 586.
16. City Council, Savannah, Georgia. Minutes of the meeting of September 14, 1870, p. 470.
17. Savannah Morning News, February 18, 1869.
18. Savannah Morning News. July 20, 1871.

19. James J. Waring, A Communication to the City Council on the Privy System of Savannah. Savannah: Morning News Steam Printing House, 1877.
20. Savannah Morning News, January 6, 1884.
21. Savannah Morning News, January 7, 1887, p. 8, c. 1.
22. Savannah Morning News, March 8, 1890, p. 8, c. 2.
23. Savannah Morning News, May 17, 1889, p. 8, c. 2.
24. City Council, Savannah, Georgia. Minutes of the meeting of March 29, 1871, p. 615.
25. Savannah Morning News, September 4, 1897.
26. Savannah Morning News, April 1, 1892.
27. Savannah Morning News, September 15, 1893.
28. Savannah Morning News, February 18, 1881.
29. Savannah Morning News, May 21, 1884.
30. Savannah Morning News, January 8, 1878.
31. Savannah Morning News, March 18, 1876.

Part III. Sources of Information

Bird's Eye View of the City of Savannah, Georgia. St. Louis: A. Ruger, 1871.

Bird's Eye View, City of Savannah, Georgia, Savannah: Augustus Koch, 1891.

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LeHardy, Dr. J. C., The Rational Method of Preventing Yellow Fever on the South Atlantic Coast, Augusta: J. M. Richards Stationer and Commercial Job Printer, 1889.

McCallie, S. W., Artesian-Well System of Georgia, Atlanta: Franklin Printing and Publishing Company, 1898.

McKinnon's Map of Savannah, ca. 1800.

Location of original not known. There is a copy done in the 1870's hanging in the Engineering Department of the city of Savannah. Shows location of the garden and farm lots.

Minutes of the City Council of Savannah

These are on microfilm at the Georgia Historical Society in a running series by date. Originals are in Clerk of Council's office City Hall.

Morrison, Mary Lane, Histories of Buildings located in the Victorian District arranged by wards and addresses, Georgia Historical Society.

Morrison, Mary Lane, Subject Index to Savannah Morning News articles concerning Savannah, Georgia Historical Society.

Morrison, Mary Lane, ed. Historic Savannah, Second Edition, Historic Savannah Foundation, The Junior League of Savannah, 1979.

Municipal Reports, Savannah, Georgia, various years at Georgia Historical Society.

Sanborn Insurance Maps of Savannah, New York: Sanborn Perris Map Co., Ltd., 1898.

Sanborn Insurance Maps of Savannah, New York: Sanborn Map and Publishing Co., Ltd., 1888.

Savannah Morning News, Daily News Herald, Daily Morning News

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Sugden, Percy and Kollock, M. C., Report of Proposed Fallout Sewers for Savannah, Georgia, Savannah: 1895.

Sweets Indexed Catalog of Building's Construction, Chicago: The Architectural Record, 1906.

Waring, Charles Ed. Three volumns of photocopies of maps of Savannah compiled by Mr. and Mrs. Charles E. Waring and deposited at the Georgia Historical Society library.

Waring, James J., A Communication to the City Council on the Privy System of Savannah, Savannah: Morning News Steam Printing House, 1877.

Yellow Pine List of Sash, Doors, Blinds, Mouldings, Chicago: Shattock and McKay, Co., Printers, 1911.

Part IV. Supplemental Material

Chronology of the History and Growth of the Victorian District

- 1838 James Frew and Amos Webb Purchases the land for Oglethorpe Town
- 1852 Sale of building lots in Oglethorpe Town
- 1854 Houses for rent Barnard and Park Avenue
- 1860 Lloyd Ward named
- 1867 Parade Ground added to Forsyth Park, called Park Extension
- 1869 Street Railroad extends to Anderson Street
- 1869 Gue, Gallie and Cuthbert Wards Named
- 1870 City Limits extended to Anderson Street
- 1871 Waring and White Wards Named
- 1871 First water pipes laid
- 1876 Yellow Fever epidemic
- 1883 First electric street lights
- 1884 First Gas mains laid in Victorian District
- 1884 Gas range in house at Bolton and Abercorn Street; also gas hot water and heat
- 1884 First pay telephone installed at Yonges Drugstore corner Whitaker and Duffy
- 1889 Water mains extended south of Anderson Street
- 1889 Privies not permitted if house is within 300' of public sewer
- 1889 City Limits extended to 42nd Street
- 1890 Half Arc system of electric lights replaces old street lights in Victorian District
- 1890 Oil lamps replaced by gas on West Broad Street
- 1900 House drainage system completed
- 1906 Dixon Park created

Checklist of Architects and Builders Working in Victorian District

Architects:

DEWITT BRUYN

- | | |
|--|------|
| 1. Duffy Street Baptist Church (altered) | 1886 |
|--|------|

ALFRED S. EICHBERG

- | | |
|---|----------|
| 1. Telfair Hospital (17 East Park Avenue) | 1886 |
| 2. 112 East Duffy Street | 1887 |
| 3. 203 East Gwinnett Street | 1887 |
| 4. 117 East Bolton Street (Demo) | 1887 |
| 5. 808 Drayton | 1889 |
| 6. St. John's Mission Chapel (202 West Duffy) | 1889 |
| 7. 114 East Duffy Street | 1889 |
| 8. 213 East Bolton Street | 1889 |
| 9. 116-118 East Duffy Street | 1891 |
| 10. 803 Whitaker Street (Wood House) | 1891 |
| 11. 215-225 East Waldburg (Demo) | ca. 1896 |

JOHN J. NEVITT

- | | |
|-----------------------------|------|
| 1. 121 East Gwinnett Street | 1884 |
| 2. 205 East Park Avenue | 1885 |

GOTTFRIED L. NORRMAN

- | | |
|---------------------------|------|
| 1. Henry Street School | 1892 |
| 2. Anderson Street School | 1896 |

WILLIAM GIBBONS PRESTON

- | | |
|-----------------------------|------|
| 1. 223 East Gwinnett Street | 1891 |
|-----------------------------|------|

HENRY URBAN

- | | |
|--|------|
| 1. Supervising Architect for 223 E. Gwinnett | 1891 |
|--|------|

HYMAN WITCOVER

- | | |
|------------------------------------|------|
| 1. Addition to Henry Street School | 1910 |
| 2. 911 Whitaker Street | 1911 |

Builders:

B. R. ARMSTRONG

- | | |
|---------------------|------|
| 1. Telfair Hospital | 1885 |
|---------------------|------|

A. J. AYLESWORTH

- | | |
|------------------------|------|
| 1. Henry Street School | 1892 |
|------------------------|------|

H. H. BADERS

- | | |
|-------------------------|------|
| 1. 214 West Park Avenue | 1879 |
|-------------------------|------|

HENRY BARTLETT

- | | |
|---------------------------------|------|
| 1. Duffy Street Baptist Church | 1886 |
| 2. 803 Whitaker Street | 1891 |
| 3. 301-303 East Gwinnett Street | 1895 |

LOUIS BLACKWELL

- | | |
|---------------------------|------|
| 1. 121 E. Gwinnett Street | 1884 |
|---------------------------|------|

BRAGDON AND SEGUR

- | | |
|---------------------------------|------|
| 1. 210-220 West Bolton Street | 1872 |
| 2. 311-315 West Waldburg Street | 1871 |

CHAPLIN AND SMITH

- | | |
|------------------------|------|
| 1. 17 West Park Avenue | 1888 |
|------------------------|------|

DAVID CLARK

- | | |
|-----------------------------|------|
| 1. 307-309 West Park Avenue | 1867 |
|-----------------------------|------|

J. R. EASON

- | | |
|-------------------------------|-----------|
| 1. 313-317 West Bolton Street | 1887-1891 |
| 2. 111 West Gwinnett Street | 1882 |
| 3. 803 Whitaker Street | 1891 |

JOHN GOULD

- | | |
|--------------------------------|------|
| 1. Duffy Street Baptist Church | 1886 |
|--------------------------------|------|

GRADY, WILLIAM H. AND TULLY, BARNARD

- | | |
|-------------------------|------|
| 1. 115 East Park Avenue | 1868 |
|-------------------------|------|

GRIMBALL AND CHAPLIN

- | | |
|-----------------------------|------|
| 1. 311-317 West Park Avenue | 1869 |
| 2. 311-315 West Waldburg | 1871 |

HAMLET AND BAILEY

- | | |
|-------------------------------|------|
| 1. 210-220 West Bolton Street | 1872 |
|-------------------------------|------|

P. KILLORIN

- | | |
|-----------------------------|------|
| 1. 111 West Gwinnett Street | 1882 |
|-----------------------------|------|

JOSEPH McCAULEY

- | | |
|--|------|
| 1. E. Bolton Street (Pape School) (Demo) | 1882 |
| 2. 906 Orayton Street | |

JOHN JOSEPH McMAHON

- | | |
|---------------------------|------|
| 1. 313 East Bolton Street | 1885 |
|---------------------------|------|

B. S. NORRIS

- | | |
|---------------------------------|------|
| 1. 113 East Duffy Street (Demo) | 1888 |
|---------------------------------|------|

MATHEW O'CONNELL

- | | |
|---------------------------------|------|
| 1. 214-218 West Waldburg Street | 1890 |
|---------------------------------|------|

WILLIAM PRUOHOLM

- | | |
|-------------------------------|------|
| 1. 301-305 East Bolton Street | 1888 |
|-------------------------------|------|

J. O. SMITH

- | | |
|----------------------------------|------|
| 1. 220-224-228 East Henry Street | 1881 |
| 2. J. A. G. Carson House | 1887 |
| 3. 220-224 W. Park Avenue | 1881 |
| 4. 211-213 East Duffy Street | 1886 |
| 5. 218 East Henry Street | 1879 |

J. J. SULLIVAN

- | | |
|---------------------------------|------|
| 1. 201-203 East Park Avenue | 1888 |
| 2. 101-108(?) East Park Avenue | 1894 |
| 3. 120-122 East Waldburg (Demo) | 1881 |

CAPTAIN HENRY G. WARD

- | | |
|------------------------------|-----------|
| 1. 121-123 West Park Avenue | 1873 |
| 2. 121-123 West Duffy Street | 1870-1871 |
| 3. 110-120 West Duffy Street | 1887 |
| 4. 207-209 West Park Avenue | 1873 |
| 5. 213 East Bolton Street | 1889 |

CHARLES WAKEFIELD

- | | |
|---------------------------------|------|
| 1. 203 West Waldburg | 1870 |
| 2. 210-212 West Waldburg Street | 1870 |

Part V. Project Information

This project was undertaken by the Historic American Buildings Survey in cooperation with the city of Savannah, the Historic Preservation Section of the Georgia Department of Natural Resources, the Savannah Landmark Rehabilitation Project, Inc., and Historic Savannah Foundation. The recording project was completed during the summer of 1979 under the general direction of John Poppeliers, Chief of HABS; Kenneth L. Anderson, Principal Architect; Eric Delony, Project Coordinator, Savannah Landmark Rehabilitation Project, Inc.; Beth Lattimore Reiter, Project Historian, Savannah Landmark Rehabilitation Project, Inc.; and Susan Dornbusch, Project Supervisor, University of Virginia; with student architects Gregori Anderson (Howard University), David Fixler (Columbia University), Stephen Lauf (Temple University), and Tamara Peacock (University of Florida), at the HABS office in Savannah, Georgia. The drawings were edited in the Washington office in September 1979 by architects Susan Dornbusch and Gregori Anderson. The historical and architectural data was reviewed and edited during October-November 1979 by staff historian Alison Hoagland. Photographs were taken in September 1979 by Walter Smalling, a staff photographer with the Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service. The documentation on the historic district will be used in the rehabilitation of the residences and in developing design guidelines for the area.

ADDENDUM TO
SAVANNAH VICTORIAN HISTORIC DISTRICT
Bounded by Cwinnett Street, East Broad Street,
Anderson Lane, and West Broad Street
Savannah
Chatham County
Georgia

HABS No. GA-1169

HABS
GA
26-SAV,
53-

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U.S. Department of the Interior
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